RAJYA SABHA

Monday, the 2nd September. 1996/ 11th Bhadra, 1918 (Saka)

The House met at eleven of the clock, Mr. Chairman *in the Chair*

OBITUARY REFERENCE

MR. CHAIRMAN: Honourable Members, 1 refer with profound sorrow to the passing away of Shri Ashoke Kumar Son, a former Member of Rajya Sabha, on 31st August, 1996. in New Delhi, at the age of 83.

Born in October, 1913 at Faridpur, now in Bangladesh, Shri Sen had his education at the Presidency College, Calcutta and the London School of Economics and Political Science. He was called to the Bar from Gray's Inn. A lawyer by profession, Shri Sen started his career as a Professor of Economics and Commercial law at the City College, Calcutta from 1941 to 1943. He was a Junior Standing Counsel for the Government of West Bengal from 1950 to 1956. He was also a Member of the Bar Council, Calcutta from 1955 to 1957.

He was associated with various social organisations. He was the founder-President of the Paschim Banga Samaj Seva Samiti; the President of the Indian Football Association, Calcutta; the President of the Supreme Court Bar Association from 1974 to 1976 and again from 1984 to 1985.

Shri Sen started his parliamentary career by becoming a Member of the Second Lok Sabha in 1957. He was also a Member of the Third, the Fourth, the Fifth, the Seventh and the Eighth Lok Sabhas. He was the leader of the Indian delegations to the U.N. Conference on the 'Law of the Sea', Geneva in 1958 and 1960; the U.N. Conference of Human Rights, Tokyo in 1960 and Delhi in 1962; the Commonwealth Law Conference and the Law Ministers' Conference in Sydney in 1965. 1985 and in Harare in 1986.

During his long legislative career, Shri Sen held important portfolios in the Union Council of Ministers like Law from April, 1957 to January, 1966; Post and Telegraphs from September, 1963 to May. 1964; Law and Social Security from 1964 to 1966 and again from December, 1984 to March, 1987 and Steel and Mines, from 1990 to 1991.

Shri Sen represented the State of West Bengal in this House from April, 1990 to April 1996.

In the passing away of Shri Ashoke Kumar Sen. the country has lost an eminent jurist, a veteran parliamentarian and a distinguished administrator.

We deeply mourn the passing away of Shri Ashoke Kumar Sen.

I request members to rise in their places and observe silence as a mark of respect to the memory of the departed.

(Hon. Members then stood in silence for one minute)

MR. CHAIRMAN: Secretary-General will convey to the members of the bereaved family our sense of profound sorrow and deep sympathy.

ORAL ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS

International Commodity Agreements

*421 DR. SHRIKANT RAM CHANDRA JICHKAR: Will the Minister of COMMERCE be pleased to state:

(a) the international commodity agreements currently subsisting alongwith their brief details;

(b) the mechanism of making a periodical review of such agreements; and

(c) the impact of the latest round of GATT on these agreements?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF COMMERCE (SHRI BQLLA BULLI RAMAIAH): (a) to (c)

A Statement is laid on the table of the House.

Statement

(a) The International Commodity Agreements currently subsisting are:

(i) International Cocoa Agreement, 1993

(ii) International Coffee Agreement, 1994

(iii) International Agreement on Jute and Jute Producls, 1989

(iv) International Agreement on Natural Rubber, 1995

(v) Internationa! Agreement on Olive Oil and Table Olives, 1993

(vi) International Tropical Timber Agreement, 1994 (To come in effect in September, 1996—presently International Tropical Timber Agreement, 1983 is in force)

(vii) International Sugar Agreement, 1992

(viii) International Grain Agreement, 1995

Board objectives of all these Agreements include consultations among and between producers and consumers; exchange of information of production, consumption and related aspects; cooperation between producers and consumers on various activities like research and development, market development, diversification etc.

(b) The Commodity Agreements generally remain in force for four/five years after their entry into force and have provisions for extensions for specified periods. As such there are no mechanisms for periodical review other than through renegotiations. There are provisions in the Agreements for negotiation of new Agreements.

(c) There is no impact of Uruguay Round on the International Commodity Agreements as such.

DR. SHR1KANT RAMCHANDRA JICHKAR: Mr. Chairman, Sir, my first supplementary pertains to part (a) of the reply, that is, the International agreement on Olive Oil and Table Olives, 1993. Sir, olive oil has assumed a great significance in view of the latest research. Olive oil is very good for heart. Two table-spoon-full of olive oil will give you a guarantee against heart attack and keep your arteries clean. Because of this, a lot of consumers want more and more olive oil. But there is a total scarcity of olive oil in the Indian market. When this agreement was entered into in 1993, did the Government realise this fact? What has the Government done to sec that there is no scarcity of olive oil in the Indian market?

SHRI BOLLA BULLI RAMAIAH: Sir, out of eight items, the hon. Member mentioned only olive oil. We have an agreement mainly with respect to coffee, jute, jute products, timber, sugar and grains. But as far as olive oil is concerned, it does not form part of our agreement with GATT.

DR. SHRIKANT RAMCHANDRA JICHKAR: I am sorry, Sir. But in the reply, it has been clearly said that following is the list of the agreements which arc subsisting and we had entered into an agreement on olive oil and table olives in 1993. The hon. Minister said that there is no agreement on olive oil and table olives. Will the Minister correct his reply or will he enlighten us more on this? The statement which he has laid on the Table of the House says that the agreement which is there at serial number (v) is the International agreement on Olive Oil and Table Olives, 1993. Kindly enlighten us on this because we are very much concerned about the coronary arteries of each other.

SHRI BOLLA BULLI RAMAIAH: We have made it very clear that out of eight commodities, we have an agreement with respect to five commodities. For the three items, including rubber and oil olive, we are just passing on the

information and not to do anything more than that.

DR. SHRIKANT RAMCHANDRA JICHKAR: It doesn't matter. But then, what has this agreement to do with it? Anyway, you kindly note down my suggestion that we have to have more and more olive oil in the Indian market because when the consciousness grows in this country, all the 800 MPs will demand olive oil. Kindly make a note of this. Sir, should I ask my supplementary? I would like to put two more supplementaries. The first supplementary has become redundant because the Minister could not reply. Now, my second supplementary deals with the International Tropical Timber Agreement, 1994. Sir, the International Tropical Timber Agreement was entered into in 1983 and it is still subsisting.

It was subsisting till yesterday because yesterday was Sunday. The International Tropical Timber Agreement, 1994 has begun from today, that is, the 2nd September, 1996. From' 1983 to 1994, that is, from the date of entering into an agreement, there were a lot of changes in our policies with respect to forests, environment, felling of timber trees, teak etc., particularly in the teak area. I come from an area which is one of the biggest timber markets in the country, that is Nagpur. Will the Minister enlighten us as to what the substantive difference between the 1983 agreement and the 1994 agreement is?

SHRI BOLLA BULLI RAMAIAH: Sir, the hon. Member wants to know about the International Tropical Timber Agreement. It is mainly concerned with exchange of information with respect to tissue culture and the product that you can develop in these countries from the point of view of climate. Research and development is going on in each country mainly to have more and more information and to protect and develop the tropical timber in each country to the extent possible. This is continuing. Only a few days back, this matter has come up in the Cabinet meeting and we have again agreed to extend the agreement further. This is advantageous not only to our country but also to the other neighbouring countries.

DR. SHRIKANT RAMCHANDRA JICHKAR: The second part of my supplementary is, now this agreement deals with passing of information with respect to tissue culture and other things. Sir, throughout India for the last five or six years we have been seeing that the multinational companies or even the Indian companies arc minting money in the name of teak. They are advertising teak bonds, this bond, that bond; you pay one thousand rupees today and take away ten lakhs of rupees after ten years! And that is something which the Forest Department says is impossible. If a teak tree is planted today, to develop that much girth, it will take about 60 years, and these companies from Bombay and from different parts of the country arc misleading the Indian public in the name of teak bonds. And then they arc using agrcultural lands. Sir, there is a bar on agricultural land being used for non-agricultural purposes. This will disrupt the agricultural and eco. balance of our country. So, it is essential that this has to be discouraged. So, in view of this Agreement, what is the information which you arc getting from other countries? Like, you are exchanging information. What will your Ministry as well as the other Ministries in association with your Ministry do to see that these companies do not mislead the Indian public?

SHRI BOLLA BULLI RAMAIAH: Sir, I agree with the hon. Member that this sort of misleading information should be cut down. However, the Environment and Forest Ministry is also taking up various issues. As far as the Commerce Ministry is concerned, we will not directly involve ourselves in these things except for the information regarding

productivity, climatic conditions, tissue development, research and other things. We will pass on the information to you. I think that it is a very good suggestion. Thank you very much.

SHRI ASHOK MITRA: Sir, most of these commodities covered by the Agreements relate to primary commodities including metals and the Minister is surely aware that in the case of most of these commodities there is a very concerted attempt on the part of the advanced industrial countries to press down the prices that are offered and even when these Agreements are renegotiated, there is an attempt to tilt the terms of trade against the primary producing countries. Now in this tussle the poorer countries had a very strong support made available to them by the United Nations agency, UNCTAD—the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development. In fact, this is the only United Nations Conference which, time and again, has come in support of the poorer countries. What has happened recently is that the advanced industrial countries are now irritated and they have a certain attitude of animosity towards UNCTAD, and recently, apparently there was a meeting of the Executive Board where a concerted attempt was made to pass some laws and by-laws which would diminish the integrity and independence of the UNCTAD Secretariat. I would hope that our Government and the Minister would look into the matter and ensure that the kind of support that we are getting from UNCTAD, we would continue to be getting and there would be no interference or aggression on behalf of the advanced industrial countries.

SHRI BOLLA BULLI RAMAIAH: Thank you very much. Sir, the hon. Member's advice is well taken and we will take that into consideration when we come to the UNCTAD Agreement, but it involves mainly nondiscrimination, greater transparency, unilateral demonstration, elimination of trade distortions, effective and reliable, dispute redressal, and some of these things will be part of it, and definitely we will take into consideration the point which he has suggested and we will have to take up this in the next round of the Conference and we will safeguard the interests of our country in all respects.

Schools under the National Child Labour Project

*422. SHRI SANATAN BIS1: Will the Minister of LABOUR be pleased to state:

(a) whether a body has been constituted to monitor at regular intervals the running of special schools under the National Child Labour Project; and

(b) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF LABOUR (SHRI M. ARUNACHALAM): (a) and (b) A statement is laid on the Table of the House.

Statement

A high powered body, namely, National Authority for Elimination of Child Labour (NAECL) was constituted on 26th September, 1994 under the Chairmanship of Labour Minister. Secretaries to Government of India in the Ministries of Labour, Information & Broadcasting, Welfare, Rural Development, Textiles and the Departments of Expenditure, Education, Health, Family Welfare and Women & Child Development are members of the National Authority for the Elimination of Child Labour. The functions of NAECL, inter alia, include formulation of policies and programmes for the elimination of child labour particularly in hazardous employments and monitoring the progress of the implementation of programmes, projects and schemes for the elimination of child labour. So far NAECL has met four times.